

Romans 8:23-28 *And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. ²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

I don't trust people who always seem to know what God's will is. Now I don't mean the general stuff that God makes clear to us in His Word, stuff like, "God wants everyone to be saved," or, "God wants us to do good works," or like "Murder is wrong." Those are obvious; God tells us that stuff. I'm talking about Christians who seem to be quite sure in virtually every situation specifically what God's will is, even in areas that God has not revealed to us. For that reason, I don't trust those pastors that have said in recent months, "God will never let any of you get sick as long as you trust in Him!" I don't trust those church leaders that claim to get visions from God as to what they should do, or what is going to happen, those who claim to know exactly what God's plan is for their lives. I don't trust them, because I don't believe that to be true, and I so don't believe them when they make those claims.

I don't trust Christians who are never stumped by the problems of their life or the problems in the lives of others, and I also don't trust Christians who never seem to struggle, who claim everything in their life is always so blessed and they're always seem to be so happy. I don't, because God tells us in Romans chapter 8 that none of these things can be true. In that chapter God tells us that as Christians, we will struggle, He tells us we will share in the sufferings of Christ, and we will face many problems that will often leave us stumped. He tells us there are somethings we just can't know.

Now, I'm not just trying to be negative, and I'm not trying to call out anyone in particular. It's just an attitude that I see sometimes among Christians that is worrisome. Because it can often lead other Christians into doubts about their own level of faith, and into questioning their relationship with God. After all, most of us realize that our lives are filled with struggles, sometimes struggles that lead to lots of questions about what God's plan exactly is and we just don't know.

If you have been facing your fair share of struggles recently, and if you have been left having such questions in your life recently. If you have been wondering what God's plan is, wondering what God is doing through all of this, then this sermon is for you. Today we'll be considering the theme:

All You Need to Know is that God Knows

I. Though we are weak and uncertain

II. God is strong and certain

In recent months, we have all become very well acquainted with some dramatic changes in our every day lives; some of our members have lost work, some have struggled to make ends meet, some have had loved ones fall ill and even die. In the section just before our text, the Apostle Paul explains why we are subjected to such suffering, why these things are taking place. He says that all of creation is currently groaning, everything on earth is suffering. That's the state of the world due to sin—BUT, he says, it is suffering and groaning with hope! There is expectation that it will all come to an end, because God promises that all of God's children and creation itself will be restored. And so, while suffering, we don't have to despair, but rather we have hope!

But that's the point, "**Hope,**" Paul says, "**is something that you can't see yet. For who hopes for what he sees?**" And so often we can't see. We can't see exactly what God is doing, we can't tell exactly how God's will is working itself out in our lives and in the lives of others, we just can't see those things yet. And so we struggle. In this life we are left groaning.

You know those times when your spouse, or your parent, or child or a friend—whoever it is—you know those times when they walk in the room, and they don't have to say anything, and you know something's not right. And they sit down, and let out a sigh, and the sigh says it all; they groan, and you know something's wrong. And that's the same language used in our text; Paul writes in our first verse "**We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.**"

Who among us hasn't been groaning recently? I think we can all nod our heads in agreement. That's exactly how we feel as we see this decaying world reveal its problems everywhere we look. We groan at the hatred, the corruption, the greed, the political divides. We groan at the divisiveness in seemingly every single interaction that we see anymore. Watching anything related to the current events makes you want to groan. When Paul was writing to the Corinthians, he described it like this "**In this tent [our bodies] we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling.**" On this side of heaven, we are groaning, because It would all be so much better if we could just be free of all this in paradise with the Lord.

Until then, all we have is questions, endless questions to which we don't know the answers. "What's going to happen in my future? Will I have job security? Where will I find my next paycheck?" Or questions about your children's future: "What is this world even going to look like by the time my children are older? What types of threats will they be facing?" Questions about our congregation: "What will this congregation look like in five years? Will we still be here? Will we have a school?"

We ask all of these questions and our weakness and our uncertainty rise up to choke us out, because that's the way it is—we just don't know how it's all going to work out! Personally, I am tired of asking all of these questions and just not knowing, it's frustrating—because I and you, we are weak and uncertain about almost everything.

Now are you ready for the comfort? I hope so, because that's what God offers to us now. Because when we are constantly reminded that we don't know, God would also have us remember there is someone who does know. When we are weak and uncertain, there is one Who is strong and certain—God's own Holy Spirit, the third person of the Triune God. Paul says, ***"The Spirit Himself helps us in our weaknesses."*** God is declaring that He Himself is using His divine power to stand beside you and to help you; even on those days when you are at your wit's end. Even in those days when it seems like so many different things are going wrong, and you aren't really sure what your next steps are, God is there to help.

He helps in this way (v. 26): ***"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."*** To "intercede" means to step in and pray for someone else. When we are at a loss for words, and when we are in such distress that we struggle even knowing where to begin—God Himself is speaking on your behalf. And when YOU do not know what God's will for your life is, the Holy Spirit DOES know. He knows and he intercedes from within your heart.

And so you don't have to know, and you don't have to pretend that you do know what God is doing. The times may be hard and confusing, and that's OK! It's just a part of the present evil age, the time when we continue to struggle and so often do not know. But the Holy Spirit knows, and He dwells in you and from within you the Holy Spirit intercedes. He's praying to the Father on your behalf. And the Father is in control! He is the one who makes everything work, and He is the one that promises He will work it out for your eternal good.

Dear friends, there is great comfort in this, because it means that you can let out a sigh of relief. You can relax. It means that you don't have to be afraid. You weren't in charge anyways. Any time that we have felt that we were in charge, any time that we felt like the decisions were all up to us and that it had better work out how we want—great sin and discouragement has come from those times. Paul here declares that we are free, free to turn from that grasping and panicky way of life that always demands to be in control. And we are free to trust God, free to trust the Holy Spirit.

Even though we don't know the content of the Holy Spirit's prayer, after all He is praying in ***"Groanings too deep for words"***—but we do know at least one word that the Spirit is praying. It's the word ***"Abba"*** which means ***"Father."*** We know that, because that one word of the Spirit's prayer is revealed to us in Galatians 4:6 where Paul writes ***"And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"*** The Spirit crying out

to God from within the heart of Christians, from within your heart, addresses God on your behalf, not addressing him as “Master,” or “Lord,” but addressing him as “Father.” And because the Spirit cries “Father,” we are not afraid, and we cry out to God as our “Father.” Romans 8:15 also agrees: **“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”** We need not be afraid. Even when we struggle, and even when we do not know—we are not afraid.

Because there was another one who cried out in a garden, in our place, for our punishment, for our salvation. Jesus also cried out “Abba, Father—Let your will be done.” In love for you and for me, Jesus submitted to the Father’s plan, praying “Not my will, but Yours.” He left it in all in His Father’s hands. And He suffered the Father’s wrath for the sin of the world, he died the death, he endured the hell. And of these things we are certain, and need never doubt, that He endured all of that for us. This Jesus has made the almighty God to be your “Abba” Father. And the Father who sent the Son for us has also sent the Spirit into us, so that even when we struggle, we need not be afraid. We don’t have to know, because our Abba, HE KNOWS, and that’s all we need to know.

In the past few months, I think I’ve watched more press conferences than I have in the rest of my life combined. Maybe you feel the same. We’ve heard what seems like hundreds of announcements from our President, from our Governor, from doctors and scientists, from virologists, economists and psychologists. And although each speaker has a different message, each press conference will usually include these words at some point: “Here’s what we know...” And the person goes on to tell us how there’s a lot that we don’t know, but here are the facts as we understand them currently.

Well, at the risk of making you turn off your TV, here’s one more press conference. This time it’s the Apostle Paul speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and so it’s God is taking the podium. He says “Here’s what we know...” at the end of our text: **“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”**

No, we don’t know everything, but we know that God does know. And He reveals this, that even if your uncertainty about everything is leaving you feeling weak, He is strong and He is certain. He will certainly work out all things—even the times we are living in—He will work them out for your eternal good. He will work these things to bring you closer to Him, your Abba Father, and He will work them to bring you to eternal life. May God grant it according to His will. Amen.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.”